

# THE HISTORICAL CONNECTION



HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
CITY OF LAS VEGAS

The official newsletter of the Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission, dedicated to saving the city's legacy and heritage

## Westleigh Neighborhood

HPC Recommends a Study of this neighborhood . . .

Nestled away, east of Valley View and south of bustling Charleston Boulevard, rests a charming neighborhood called Westleigh. Traveling on the streets of Darmark, Melville, Tarmark, or Barnard, a passerby is welcomed by manicured grass lawns, full-grown trees, and kempt houses. If one looks closely, a tree house can be seen in a couple of backyards.

The Westleigh Neighborhood derives its name from the Westleigh subdivision, which divides the neighborhood into five tracts. The majority of Westleigh homes were built in tract one through four, which

range in age from 1951 to 1954.

Tract five was built a few years later and their age of homes range from 1955 to 1957.

A typical Westleigh home is small, wood-frame construction with stucco exterior, concrete tile roof and a small raised porch. There were approximately four to five different models with varying roof, window and porch configurations.

Responding to a swell of interest from neighborhood residents in preserving their



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## Biography Corner: Ray Aikens

by Chuck Baker

The newest member of the Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is Ray Aikens, a local Realtor with an interest in the roots of the city. Because his career is in real estate, he smiles when he points out that if the families of individuals who bought land at the original 1905 Las Vegas auction had hung onto it, "they would be gazillionaires today."

Investment comments aside, Aikens feels he is enriched by being a part of Las Vegas and serving on the HPC. Originally from southern

California, he lived in Utah and attended Weber State University in Ogden, but found he did not enjoy the harsh winters. He moved to Las Vegas in 1985, transferring to UNLV and graduating with a degree in Psychology.

Aikens is married and has three daughters, including a set of twins.

"My wife and I have had an interest in southern Nevada history since we lived here. We went to Caliente and Pioche and the older areas of the state, and we visited the older neighborhoods in Las Vegas like the Mormon Fort and area museums."

Aikens said he initially had a job that did not allow him to attend HPC meetings, but when he entered real estate, he was able to adjust his schedule. He came to meetings for about nine months before there was a position open for a commissioner. When one of the commissioners resigned, Aikens was asked to apply, and was approved by the City Council.

"I felt that being a Realtor in the community, I needed to help make the community a better place. And to me, historic preservation is a worthwhile endeavor that helps all concerned."

## Reenactment of the Las Vegas Townsite Auction



A reenactment of the Clark Las Vegas Townsite Auction that took place on May 15, 1905, was held on Fremont Street in May of 2005. From left, Mayor Oscar Goodman, Louise Helton and Historic Preservation Commission Chairman Bob Stoldal took part in the event.



Several members of the Historic Preservation Commission took part in the recreation of the Las Vegas Townsite Auction's 100th Anniversary. From left, Commissioner Janet White; Historic Preservation Officer Courtney Mooney; and Commissioner Ray Aikens.

## Frequently Asked Question

What is the difference between the National Register and the Local Historic Property Register?

If you are confused by the different types of historic property designation, you are not alone! It can be very confusing for property owners and misinformation can lead to an owner's hesitance to pursue designation for their historic property. There are basically two main types: National vs. Local designation. Not every municipality has a local historic property register, but every state in the Union has a State Historic Preservation Office which can designate historic properties on the National Register of Historic Places.

The city of Las Vegas has a Local Historic Property Register which protects the historic character of designated properties through a local ordinance. Such properties fall under the jurisdiction of the city of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). Designation provides the means to make sure that growth, development, and change take place in ways that respect important architectural, historical, and environmental characteristics by encouraging appropriate and contextual development. This happens through a process called design review, whereby the HPC approves major changes that are planned for the district or does not approve (with suggestions for improvement). In addition, a local historic designation is generally "overlaid" on existing zoning classifications in a community; therefore, the HPC deals only with the appearance of the property or district, not with the uses to which such properties are put (uses are determined through the zoning and land-use process).

By contrast, the National Register is our country's official list of historic places worthy of preservation because they are historically, architecturally, or archaeologically significant. National Register listing simply recognizes the significance of properties and districts. By doing so, it identifies significant historic resources in a community. National Register listing also makes available specific preservation incentives and provides a limited degree of protection from the effects of federally funded, licensed or permitted activities. National Register listing does not fall under the jurisdiction of the city of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) design review process. However, because the district is listed on the National Register, the Planning and Development Department strongly encourages sensitive and contextual design within the neighborhood to preserve its historic character and integrity.

## Upcoming Events

### September

- National Register Workshop

### October

- National Register Workshop

### November

- National Register Workshop

If you miss the workshop, please contact the NV State Historic Preservation Office at 1-775-684-3448 for information on this topic.

# Mormon Fort Opens Doors to History

by Chuck Baker

The old Mormon Fort State Park recently held an open house to show off its reconstructed buildings and visitor's center that offer glimpses into the city's past.

Part of one of the structures is, in fact, the oldest building in southern Nevada, an adobe edifice that conjures up visions of the Old Spanish Trail (Mormon Road), a portion of which runs where Cashman Center now sits.

The buildings and the part – at 500 East Washington Avenue – contain exhibits and artifacts detailing how the Las Vegas area grew, bit by bit, initially

by the steady sauntering of a procession of soldiers, explorers, ranchers and others who took advantage of the walking trail and contributed, however slight, to the growth of the valley.

The original fort was built by the Mormons in 1855, and initially consisted of an adobe enclosure, the first permanent structure in the valley. The outpost included a post office, contributing to the area's draw as a popular respite for travelers. It might be said that it took until the 2000s to reach its full potential as a rest stop, because today the fort is a state historic park and a centerpiece of the history of Las Vegas, visited by thousands each year.

During the open house, costumed characters were on hand to show how some people dressed in the late 1800s. A local chapter of Civil War reenactors – properly attired in blue Union military garb – often volunteer at the fort, adding another touch of authenticity. The historic island includes sites of Mormon corrals, the fort stockade enclosure, a replica of a pioneer garden, and a recreated portion of the Las Vegas Creek.

The park is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., seven days a week. For details of admission fees and additional information, call (702) 486-3511.

## Westleigh continued from front page

homes and protecting their current lifestyle, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended a study of the neighborhood. The windshield survey detected that there were very few changes within the tracts such as window, roof and porch variations. The few major alterations found were siding, window replacement, roof tile replacement, room additions, garage and carport additions, and second story additions. Based on the initial survey, the overall integrity of the neighborhood is good, with better than 50% of the homes either intact, or intact with minor modifications.



The Historic Preservation Commission is a 12-member board made up of community members appointed by the Las Vegas City Council. The board is responsible for hearing and recommending approval for designation of historic landmarks, properties and districts to the city's register, overseeing alterations, new construction and demolition of designated properties or properties within the designated district; and making recommendations to the City Council. Meetings: 4th Wednesday, 12:00, 731 S. Fourth Street, except 3rd Wednesday in November and December.

Bob Stoldal, chairperson  
Dorothy Wright, vice-chair  
Ray Aikens  
Chuck Baker  
Bob Bellis  
H. Richard Cuppett  
Mary Hausch  
Andrew Kirk  
Pat Klenk  
Dave Millman  
James Veltman  
Janet White

For more information about historic preservation efforts, contact:  
Courtney Mooney - Historic Preservation Officer  
731 South Fourth, Las Vegas, Nevada 89101  
•phone 702.229.5260 •fax 702.474.7463  
cmooney@lasvegasnevada.gov